

Big Ridge State Park

Trail Descriptions

Chestnut Ridge Trail

This 1.75 mi. one-way trail leads from the cabin area to the road near the back entrance of the park. This easy to moderate hike offers a variety of sites to see including sinkholes, Lyon's Spring Branch and remains of American Chestnut trees which once dominated the ridge before being decimated by a blight. One of the most notable sites is the land itself where signs of erosion, farming uses and forest succession can be seen.

Ole' Mill Trail

This trail is a short and easy hike that leads from the lakeside cabins to Norton Gristmill which was built in 1825 and was privately operated until 1930. Along the way to the mill, the trail meanders along Big Ridge Lake to Lyon's Spring Branch which supplied the water to make the mill wheel turn. Be sure to look for signs of beaver along the way also.

Fisherman's Trail

This short and easy trail begins near the back entrance of the park and takes you to an area of Norris Lake known as Poor Land Valley. Some say that this area obtained its name many years ago because of the poor quality of the soil for farming.

Loyston Overlook Trail

This short trail to Loyston Overlook takes visitors to an area where the widest portion of Norris Lake can be seen. Norris Lake was formed in the 1930's with the completion of the Tennessee Valley Authority's first dam, Norris Dam. Surprisingly, this area of the lake called Loyston Sea was once a bustling town named Loyoston, founded in the early 1800's by John Loy who established a foundry in this area. The town of Loyston once included a grocery store, gas station, school, churches, and even a post office, all of which were covered by the waters of Norris Lake.

Meditation Point Trail

This short and easily traveled trail climbs to a covered bench shelter which makes for an excellent spot to relax or get more in touch with the natural world.

Lake Trail

This 1.5 mi. easy to moderate trail meanders along 45 acre Big Ridge Lake and across Big Ridge Dam which was constructed in the 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corp, the young men responsible for building many of the structures in the park. To one side of the dam is Big Ridge Lake, to the other is Norris Lake. This trail is an excellent one for viewing wildlife such as deer, frogs, heron, wood ducks and much more. If you like, you can also make a stop at the Snodderly Cemetery where many of the area's earlier inhabitants are buried.

Ghost House Trail

For the adventurer, try out this 1.2 mile easy to moderate loop that begins near the group camp and takes you deep into the history of this area's pre-1930's inhabitants.

Big Valley Trail

The 3.4 mile round trip Big Valley trail is a strenuous hike that travels a road used by many of this area's earlier settlers as they hauled corn down to the Norton Gristmill. The trail follows the side of the ridge overlooking a deep valley. Several species of Spring wildflowers can be seen including pink lady's slippers, yellow star grass, crested dwarf iris and many others.

Dark Hollow Trail

This trail has an eastern and western portion. The 1.7 mile western portion leads from Big Ridge Dam to Big Valley Trail, while the 1.3 mile eastern portion continues on from there and dead ends at Norris Lake. This trail was once a country road and there are still many noticeable areas where some of Big Ridge's settlers made their homes. The trail gets its name because it is said that no matter what time of day one walked through the

Hollow, a lantern was needed to find one's way. The ridge north of the Hollow is Big Ridge and the ridge south of the Hollow is Pinnacle Ridge, known locally as Pine Ridge.

Indian Rock Trail

The 2.6 mile round trip Indian Rock Trail begins just past Langley Cemetery via the Big Valley Trail. Indian Rock Trail leads to a rocky area where a plaque commemorates the location where Peter Graves, a settler of Sharp's Station was killed by Indians. Graves was turkey hunting when he thought he heard a turkey gobble behind some rocks. To his surprise there was no turkey, but a group of Indians.

Sharp's Station Trail

Recommended for the experienced hiker only, this strenuous 2 mile trail veers off from Big Valley and goes deep into the Big Ridge forest to the shores of Norris Lake where the remnants of the old Sharp's Station Fort can be seen. Sharp's Station, founded in the late 1780's was one of the first two settlements west of the Appalachians. The other being James White Fort in Knoxville. A stone wall is all that remains of Sharp's Station Fort, but a plaque commemorates the area.